

# NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

# Table of Contents

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY.....	1
Executive Summary .....	1
Full Text of Announcement .....	2
I. Funding Opportunity Description.....	2
II. Award Information .....	5
III. Eligibility Information.....	7
IV. Application and Submission Information .....	8
V. Application Review Information.....	19
VI. Award Administration Information.....	22
VII. Agency Contacts.....	29
VIII. Other Information .....	29

## Executive Summary

### Federal Agency Name

NOS Office for Coastal Management (OCM)

### Funding Opportunity Title

FY 2025-2029 Reef Research Coordinating Institute Designation and Cooperative Agreements

### Announcement Type

Institutional

### Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NOS-OCM-2025-28920

### Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.482

### Dates

Proposals must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) on January 31, 2025. A webinar outlining required proposal elements and the review process will take place on November 6, 2024 at 5:00 pm EST, 12:00 pm Hawaii Standard Time (HST), and November 7, 2024 at 8:00 am Chamorro Standard Time (ChST). This will be recorded and made available for those who are unable to attend.

### Funding Opportunity Description

The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) invites applications for the establishment of two Reef Research Coordination Institutes (RRCIs) through cooperative agreements to support the research, restoration, and management of shallow-water coral reef ecosystems within the U.S. states and territories. The two RRCIs will be to be known as the "Atlantic Reef Research Coordination Institute" and the "Pacific Reef Research Coordination Institute" and will hold this designation for an initial five (5) year period of performance and may be renewed for up to another five (5) years without competition. Applicants must be previously designated as a Coral Reef Research Center by the CRCP in 2024.

The selected RRCIs must be able to work across a variety of areas including conducting research, supporting ecological research and monitoring, building capacity within jurisdictional resource management agencies, translating research findings to management and restoration practices, and conducting public education and awareness programs. Building capacity in the jurisdictions may include a variety of actions such as supporting personnel, providing training on jurisdictional driven topics, and/or managing a national fellowship program.

NOAA CRCP anticipates that up to \$4,500,000 may be available annually for distribution between the two RRCIs. The actual annual funding will be based on 1) CRCP annual appropriations, 2) current and future national and state priorities, 3) the quality of projects proposed and selected during the negotiations, and 4) the satisfactory progress in achieving the stated goals described in project proposals.

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have effective access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organizations must first obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov, if needed (refer to Section IV. Applications and Submission Information, Section C). Organizations can register with eRA Commons in tandem with completing their full SAM and Grants.gov registrations; however, all registrations must be in place by time of application submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.

## Full Text of Announcement

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

The purpose of this announcement is to designate two Reef Research Coordination Institutes (RRCIs) to work collaboratively with NOAA and other partners to advance and sustain coral reef research capabilities and help build capacity in the U.S. coral reef jurisdictions. Successful applicants will hold this designation for an initial five (5) year period of performance and may be renewed for up to another five (5) years without competition.

#### Reef Research Coordination Institute Concept/Background

There will be two RRCIs, one in the Atlantic basin and one in the Pacific basin, the 'Atlantic Reef Research Coordination Institute' and the 'Pacific Reef Research Coordination Institute.' Eligible applicants are limited to designated coral reef research centers (CRRCs; see Section III.A. Eligible Applicants for a list of CRRCs). RRCIs will have the following functions within their respective basin, and shall:

1. Conduct research to fill national and regional coral reef ecosystem research gaps and improve understanding of, and responses to, continuing and emerging threats to the resilience of United States coral reef ecosystems;
2. Support ecological research and monitoring to promote more effective coral reef management and restoration; and
3. Enter into agreements to:
  - a. Collaborate directly with:
    - i. States that contain a coral reef ecosystem within their seaward boundaries: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau;

- ii. Native entities (the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and Native Hawaiian organizations with an interest in a coral reef ecosystem);
  - iii. Coral reef stewardship partnerships (16 U.S.C. § 6405);
  - iv. Nonprofit organizations; and
  - v. Other designated coral reef research centers (See III.A. Eligibility Information);
- b. Assist in the implementation of the National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy and applicable coral reef action plan (16 U.S. Code § 6404) goals and objectives;
  - c. Build capacity within jurisdictional resource management agencies on research priorities and translate research findings to management and restoration practices; and
  - d. Conduct public education and awareness programs for policymakers, resource managers, and the general public on coral reefs and coral reef ecosystems, including best practices for management and restoration; coral reefs' value; and threats to coral reef ecosystems.

This announcement will not award funding for construction projects. A construction project is defined as an award in which the major purpose of the project or program is construction.

## **B. Program Priorities**

### **PRIORITY ACTIVITIES**

Successful RRCIs will need to demonstrate they can support activities across all three priority areas listed below (Research, Monitoring, and Capacity Building) and have established, or can establish, partnerships with federal and state governments, and other organizations to identify and address key coral reef research needs.

1. Conduct research to fill national and regional coral reef ecosystem gaps and support more effective coral reef management and conservation. Applications should address one or more of the following actions:
  - a. Research to identify and improve the understanding of climate variability and change, as well as anthropogenic impacts on ecosystems and the effect of these changes on the interactions between people and natural systems at the global, regional, and local levels;
  - b. Identify drivers of coral disturbances and intervention techniques to increase resilience of different coral species to major disturbances, including coral bleaching;
  - c. Determine water quality impacts to coral reef ecosystems, identify, characterize, and quantify the thresholds important for coral reef ecosystem health conditions;
  - d. Develop new techniques, technologies and research to implement scaling up of restoration and address bottlenecks in restoration efficiencies (e.g., genetic diversity, herbivore co-culture, and post-settlement survival);
  - e. Conduct research on population status and ecology of coral reef fisheries taxa (e.g., tagging, biological sampling, fishery monitoring, and habitat);
  - f. Conduct larval connectivity studies on fish, corals, and/or other invertebrates to determine optimal conservation actions, as determined by management needs;
  - g. Study different methods of invasive species identification, assessment, prevention, mitigation, and removal/culling, tailored towards the management needs; and
  - h. Enhance scientific understanding of the interconnections between the marine ecosystem and the adjacent watershed including their human health and resource stewardship implications.
2. Support ecosystem monitoring initiatives, such as the National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP) and/or long-term State or territorial monitoring efforts. Applications should address one or more of the following actions:

- a. Employ new techniques for decision support, including data analysis, synthesis, visualization, and display that allow NOAA and other stakeholders to conduct science more efficiently and share results with coral reef managers;
  - b. Participate in the development of data products that characterize the causes and consequences of coral reef conditions and the costs and benefits of possible management actions to maintain or improve conditions; and
  - c. Integrate data at appropriate spatial and temporal scales to understand the causes of coral reef ecosystem change and the rate at which they occur to inform management actions.
3. Enter into agreements and collaborate directly with States, nonprofits, coral reef research centers and other organizations (see Section I.A.3.a) to build capacity in U.S. coral reef jurisdictions and conduct public education and awareness programs on coral reefs. Applications should address one or more of the following actions:
- a. Build capacity in State resource management agencies to address local gaps by engaging qualified individuals who meet administrative, management, and scientific needs;
  - b. Provide assistance with developing and improving databases for long-term coral reef and water quality monitoring data for coral reef ecosystem management;
  - c. Help develop locally-relevant communications, public outreach and education, community engagement, graphic design, and educational materials to facilitate the implementation of research results into scientific and management actions;
  - d. Increase opportunities for individuals from under-represented groups, university students, and/or local government agencies to participate in coral reef trainings, in-water field work, or other research and management activities to develop expertise and capacity; and
  - e. Enhance community engagement when identifying new data needs and pursuing results from data and information.

Examples of jurisdictional-specific priority activities are available as an attachment in grants.gov for reference.

#### **CAPABILITIES AND CAPACITIES**

Successful applicants will need to provide information on how their current institutional capacities, facilities, and expertise will support the implementation of the activities listed above. Applicants should address the following items:

##### Specialized Administrative Capabilities

The designated RRCI must be able to conduct multi-disciplinary research in collaboration with a range of partners, including State governments (see Section I.A.3.a.i), Native entities (see Section I.A.3.a.ii), nonprofit organizations, and other designated CRRCs within their basin to conduct research and build capacity.

The proposal should demonstrate (through proposed projects) the ability to:

1. Hire and host the All Islands Committee's Executive Director position, including related fringe, travel, and expenses. The Executive Director coordinates the activities of the All Islands Committee, which is a subset of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (16 U.S.C. §§ 6451-6456) and includes all member States and territories. The Executive Director must travel to the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meetings at minimum, one (1) in Washington, D.C., and one (1) rotating among the member States and territories every year. The RRCI will need to negotiate salary, location, and all other conditions of employment after the designation. The Executive Director position will be administered by one RRCI; and

2. Administer capacity building programs, including the Susan L. Williams Coral Reef Management Fellowship (16 U.S.C. § 6481), to help train the next generation of scientists and management practitioners. The program currently supports seven (7) fellows for two (2) years per cohort, one each in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, totalling approximately \$650,000 per year. The fellowship program will be administered by one RRCI.

Additionally, the proposal will need to demonstrate either by statement in the Center Qualifications section or through proposed projects the institution's ability to:

1. Hire positions, as needed, to support jurisdictional and regional coral reef staffing needs (examples of State-specific research and capacity needs are available as an attachment in grants.gov for reference);
2. Support required annual jurisdictional reporting requirements in the CRCA, including a Congressional report highlighting the status of the coral reef resources, recent coral reef management and restoration activities, and updated estimates of the economic activity supported by those coral reef resources (16 U.S.C. § 6452(5)); and
3. Support local meetings, workshops, and symposiums for coral reef managers in each basin, which may include U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meetings.

#### Specialized Research Capacities

A critical component of an RRCI will be the ability to conduct research that fills national and regional coral reef ecosystem research needs. The selected RRCIs will need to demonstrate either by statement in the Center Qualifications section or through project proposals that they currently possess, have access to, or can obtain, the following infrastructure to support research and management needs:

1. Scientific laboratory space and equipment for biological, chemical, physical, and geological marine research;
2. Cold and dry storage facilities;
3. Facilities suitable for the long-term, ex-situ holding of corals and other reef-associated species for research, and restoration (e.g., wet labs for conducting large-scale tank experiments and/or coral raceways);
4. Computing and data storage sufficient for complex analyses, modeling, machine learning, etc.;
5. Field research gear appropriate for the identified research priorities;
6. Vessels that can support nearshore marine research and monitoring; and
7. Scientific diving facilities and a training program that is reciprocal to NOAA Dive Center standards <<https://www.omao.noaa.gov/diving-program/reciprocity>>.

### **C. Program Authority**

Grant authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program is provided by the Coral Reef Conservation Act, as amended, 16 USC 6401-15; see e.g., 6411, 6414(a)(3).

## **II. Award Information**

### **A. Funding Availability**

All funding is contingent upon the availability of federal appropriations. NOAA anticipates approximately \$4,500,000 will be available annually, to be divided between two RRCIs. Each applicant may apply for the full available amount, up to \$4,500,000, in fiscal year (FY) 2025, and \$22,500,000 total over five (5) years. The actual annual funding that an RRCI receives may be less than the requested amount and will depend on the projects that are approved by NOAA after the initial RRCI award begins, the availability of funding, the quality of the research, the alignment of project progress to the original project proposal's stated goals, and continued relevance to CRCP program objectives.

The lead applicant on any proposal will be responsible for ensuring that allocated funds are used for the purposes of, and in a manner consistent with, this program, including any funds awarded to an eligible sub-awardee.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant does so at their own risk of not being selected and these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Direct costs of proposal preparation shall not be included within the project application budget. In addition, NOAA and the Department of Commerce (DOC) will not be responsible for project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

In the event that this competition does not result in the awarding of cooperative agreements in this fiscal year due to a lack of available funding, the results of the competition may still be used to officially designate the Atlantic Reef Research Coordination Institute and Pacific Reef Research Coordination Institute in an unfunded capacity. These RRCIs would then be eligible for award selection and funding in future years (i.e., FY 2026) without new competition, when funds become available.

## **B. Project/Award Period**

“Institutional” awards are planned for this program. Funds are proposed to be awarded based on competition and with the intent to maintain a long-term partnership between NOAA and the recipients. New awards may be made on a noncompetitive basis if recipients perform satisfactorily, re-apply, and if the results of the periodic reviews validate the effectiveness and continued desirability of the use of institutional awards for the program and the recipient.

The initial award period in this program will be five (5) years and an award may be renewed for up to an additional five (5) years. NOAA anticipates reviewing the grant program within five (5) years to validate the effectiveness and continued desirability of the use of institutional awards and may elect to continue the program issuing non-competitive award(s), hold a competition, revise the program, or discontinue the program.

The start date on proposals shall be October 1, 2025 and end September 30, 2030.

Applications should conform to performance periods of five (5) consecutive one (1) year plans, with funding for the second, third, fourth, and fifth years estimated in the application.

## **C. Type of Funding Instrument**

The funding instrument for each award will be a cooperative agreement as described in 2 C.F.R. Sec. 200.1 Definitions, meaning that NOAA is “substantially involved” in the project. The CRCP anticipates substantial involvement may include the collaboration and participation of NOAA Federal Program Officers, Coral Reef Management Liaisons, Coral Reef Fisheries Liaisons, and other NOAA staff in project development, planning and implementation; technical monitoring of award activities beyond ordinary stewardship; and coordination of funded projects with other CRCP-funded efforts as needed. NOAA may further participate in one or more of the following ways:

- Collaboration on the scope of work through leading research directions, scientific collaborations, and providing assistance with technical aspects of projects, including permitting and development of work plans and monitoring plans;
- Collaboration on implementation of project activities related to the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, the All Islands Committee, fellowship programs, the National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy, coral reef action plans, public reporting, reef management policies and practices, convening of partners, and meeting planning and facilitation;
- Increasing access to, and building capacity of partners to use NOAA or federal data, tools, and equipment; and data management and sharing activities, including development of spatial databases, models, and information analyses; and/or

- Other involvement consistent with Office of Management and Budget Guidance on Substantial Involvement, as negotiated with the recipient. See 43 Federal Register 36860 (Aug. 18, 1978).

Applicants may also propose anticipated specific federal roles and responsibilities in their proposals. Successful applicants will formalize the specific roles of the federal agency during the award negotiation process. The specific nature of CRCP's substantial involvement will be described in an award condition included in a funded award. Applicants tentatively selected for funding should discuss the specific roles of the federal agency during project negotiations.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are limited to the following institutes of higher education and nonprofits designated as coral reef research centers under the Coral Reef Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 6411(b)):

- American Samoa Community College
- Arizona State University Center for Global Discovery and Conservation Science
- Caribbean Coral Reef Institute
- Center for Applied Tropical Ecology and Conservation, University of Puerto Rico
- Coral Restoration Foundation
- Coral World Ocean and Reef Initiative
- Florida Atlantic University
- Florida Institute of Oceanography at Key Marine Laboratory
- Florida Institute of Technology
- Florida International University
- Hawaii Marine Education Research Center
- Hawaii Sea Grant
- Institute of Socio Ecological Research
- Mote Marine Laboratory
- National Coral Reef Institute at Nova Southeastern University
- Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science
- Plant A Million Corals Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy, Hawaii and Palmyra
- The Nature Conservancy, Puerto Rico Program
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy, USVI Coral Innovation Hub
- University of Florida Sea Grant
- University of Florida
- University of Guam Marine Laboratory
- University of Hawaii at Hilo Department of Marine Science
- University of Hawaii at Hilo, Multiscale Environmental Graphical Analysis (MEGA) Lab
- University of Hawaii Systems
- University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric, and Earth Science
- University of Puerto Rico, Department of Marine Sciences
- University of Puerto Rico, Humacao Campus Marine Biology Program
- University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez
- University of the Virgin Islands



The Pacific Reef Research Coordinating Institute must be located within American Samoa, Guam, or Hawaii. The Atlantic Reef Research Coordinating Institute must be located within Florida, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. Only one CRRC in each basin will receive a RRCI designation and financial assistance award. In the event that a consortium of CRRCs submits a single application, the designation and award will reside with the submitting CRRC and that CRRC will be solely responsible for the award's administration.

**To be eligible to apply or receive an award, applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations: SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. For each, the complete registration process can take 4 to 6 weeks.** For more information on how to meet these registration and application submission requirements without errors, we advise all to carefully review relevant Applicant and Grantee Training modules:

<https://www.commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training>.

Additionally, we advise that all carefully read 'Additional Application Package Forms' within the 'Full Proposal Required Elements' section below.

NOAA employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications. NOAA CRCP staff are available to provide general information on programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs/activities, and regional funding priorities. For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees may provide a limited statement verifying the nature and extent of the collaboration and confirming prior coordination activities. Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowable and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers.

Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement, but may serve as collaborative project partners. If federal agencies are collaborators, applicants are expected to provide detail on the planned level of federal engagement in the application. Examples may include, but are not limited to, partnership services, serving in a review capacity, or participating in priority task teams, working groups, or leadership teams. DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to participate in proposals submitted to this program. In addition, DOC/NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in historically underserved areas. DOC/NOAA encourages applications involving any of the above institutions to apply.

### **B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement**

Cost sharing is not required. However, given the collaborative nature and investment of a RRCI by both NOAA and the applying institution, voluntary cost sharing commitments will be accepted but not factored into the evaluation. Acceptable cost-sharing proposals include, but are not limited to: offering a reduced indirect cost rate against activities in one or more projects, waiver of any indirect costs assessed by the awardee on subawards, waiver of indirect costs assessed against base funds and/or activities, waiver or reduction of any costs associated with the use of facilities at the RRCI, and full or partial salary funding for administration staff, or third party contributions of goods and services. See 2 C.F.R. 200.306.

### **C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility**

NA

## **IV. Application and Submission Information**

### **A. Address to Request Application Package**

The standard SF-424 application package is available online at <http://www.grants.gov>. If the electronic application is not accessible, applicants may request a paper application package from Mr. Craig Reid, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or email [craig.a.reid@noaa.gov](mailto:craig.a.reid@noaa.gov).

### **B. Content and Form of Application**

Applicants should submit a complete standard NOAA financial assistance application package in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Applications that do not follow the proposal application requirements stated in this announcement may not be considered for review.

All application materials should use a legible 11- or 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. Electronic applications must be submitted as Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) to the extent possible.

Prior to submission, carefully review the PDF Guidelines for submission found here: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>. Recent applicants have encountered rejected applications for formatting issues, especially:

- Do not use “bundling” or “portfolio” features to combine PDFs into a single document. Everything must be visible in the PDF.
- Descriptive filenames may only be 50 characters or less (including spaces).
- Keep attachment file size to 100 MB or less.
- eRA won't accept any pages larger than the U.S. standard letter paper size (8.5" x 11").

We strongly recommend that applicants attempt to submit their full proposals at least a few days or more prior to the due date in case these or other issues impact your submission, as they are not reasons we can extend the deadline. If you have issues during the submission process, please contact the eRA Service Desk.

The complete application package should include the following forms and documents:

1. **Title Page.** The title page should clearly indicate the proposed name of the RRCI, principal investigators, total amount of Federal funds being requested, award period, and a brief abstract containing a description of the RRCI, research, and proposed activities.
2. **Center Qualifications.** The Center Qualifications section should be limited to no more than 15 pages single spaced and will be used by NOAA to confirm that the applicant has the required capacities, capabilities, and expertise to conduct coral reef research and meet the primary functions of an RRCI (see Section 1.A.). All proposals should include the following sections:
  - a. Goal(s) and Objective(s) of the RRCI.** The applicant should clearly describe the goals and objectives of the RRCI, and what the RRCI expects to accomplish during the award. Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported.
  - b. Coral Reef Research Experience.** Applicants should describe their recent involvement in coral reef research efforts in each jurisdiction within the relevant ocean basin, including a list of all relevant coral reef research projects within the last five (5) years. The application should include a list, broken out by jurisdiction, of project titles, funding agency or organization, project duration, and total award value in the appendices. This section should be a brief summary, not to exceed two (2) pages.
  - c. Administrative Structure.** This section should describe the organizational structure of the RRCI and must describe how the RRCI chooses projects and reviews its progress, as well as how the RRCI will support enhanced communication and collaborations with NOAA and partners. If any RRCI personnel are proposed to work in facilities not operated by the RRCI (e.g., NOAA or state facilities), this section must describe the administrative support structure (i.e., financial/human resources) requested for such personnel and would be expected to voluntarily reduce the approved negotiated indirect cost rate accordingly.

**d. Partnerships and networks.** In order to be competitive for the RRCI designation, CRRCs should be able to enter in memoranda of agreement with various States (see Section I.A.3.a.i.), Native entities (see Section I.A.3.a.ii.), nonprofit organizations, other CRRCs (see Section III.A.), and other non-Federal entities as members of future coral reef stewardship partnerships (16 U.S.C. § 6405) within their respective ocean basin.

- Identify and describe the professional or technical network that will be leveraged or created through this RRCI.
- Describe how the partners and network users will interact with the RRCI and research project(s), the communication mechanism utilized to engage the network, and describe how they will use the outcome or results of the project.
- Describe what existing federal, state, and local organizations or programs will be connected, integrated, and leveraged.
- Describe the roles of partners and indicate any efforts or resources that will be leveraged in the project.
- Include letters of collaboration from partners and any letters of support in the appendices, as appropriate. These are not expected from other eligible applicants (i.e., other CRRCs) but will be accepted.

3. **Project Description.** The Project Description section should be limited to no more than 50 pages single spaced. Applications should provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of the proposed work to program priorities described in Section I.B of this announcement; to determine the technical/scientific merit of the proposed work; to adequately review the qualifications of the applicants; and to assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to federal policy considerations, such as those related to the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Historic Preservation Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act.

a. **Five-year Project Portfolio.** The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how the applicant's qualifications and experience previously described (see Section IV.B.2.b) may translate into implementable projects that directly respond to national, regional, and State-specific priorities. Many to most of these proposed projects are unlikely to be selected and incorporated into the final application, which will be negotiated between NOAA and the CRRC after the two RRCIs have been selected for designation and NOAA has received their FY 2025 Congressional appropriations. However, this section will be weighted heavily by merit and panel reviewers (see Section V.) and should highlight the applicant's capacity and willingness to support a diverse range of functions, priorities, geographies, and partner types (see Sections I.A, I.B., I.A.3.a.i, and I.A.3.a., respectively).

The project portfolio must include **abstract-level summaries of potential project descriptions, timelines, and approximate budgets** for projects which *could* be conducted by the RRCI during the five-year award period if fully funded at up to \$4,500,000 per year. At least one project (or component of a project) must be located in, or directly benefit, each of the States within the relevant ocean basin. *The Freely Associated States may be included but are not required for this section.* Refer to Section I.B for national and regional research and capacity-building priorities, as well as the attached list of State-specific priorities. Note that these priorities are not exhaustive and other projects may be proposed. The selection of this proposal neither precludes the RRCI from proposing additional research projects after the award has been made as long as they are consistent with the pending National Coral Resilience Strategy, nor obligates NOAA to fund the projects proposed in this application.

If the project includes Federal partners, the roles and responsibilities of the federal partners must be clearly identified.

b. **Performance Measures.** Include proposed measures to be used by the RRCI to gauge, quantify, and/or evaluate progress on both individual projects and its overall performance. The narrative should include information on dissemination of the findings/results to resource managers, local communities, and other partners as appropriate.

c. **Outreach and Education:** Include a list of entities the applicant may partner with in future coral reef research and how results will be disseminated within the coral reef community in support of the research priorities described above.

Project descriptions must not exceed 50-pages and will be shortened by removing pages at the end of this section before it is forwarded to merit and panel reviewers for evaluation. Pages removed from lengthy applications will not be reviewed or considered. Applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors may not be understood effectively by reviewers, resulting in lower evaluation scores, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

4. Budget Narrative and Justification (see below for details)

5. Appendices (see below for details)

6. The following Federal forms from the SF-424 Form Family should be included in the application package, as applicable (no page limit with forms and related mandatory federal form information). Please note that these federal forms must be filled out in a Grants.gov Workspace:

a. Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424.

Applicants requesting Federal funding under this program must submit a copy of SF-424, 'Application for Federal Assistance'. If the applicant submits a hard copy of the final application, the SF-424 must be signed and dated by the organization's authorized representative and used as the cover page for the final application. An electronic signature and date stamp will automatically be included on SF-424 forms submitted via Grants.gov. Applicants will be required to enter their organization's Congressional District in the SF424 R&R form. For tips on finding and entering your Congressional District correctly, please review the information found here:

<https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2017/06/21/how-to-find-your-congressional-district-for-the-sf-424-form/>

b. Budget Information for Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A.

Applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form to summarize the budget for the proposed scope of work. The first column of Sections A and B shows the federal funds requested, while the second column of Sections A and B shows the non-federal matching funds provided for the project. Total award funding is shown in the final column of Section B. Non-federal funding is broken out by source in Section C. Forecasted cash needs in Section D should be inclusive of all funding for multi-year projects. Federal and non-Federal funds should be expended at a similar rate throughout the course of the project. Section E may be left blank. Section F summarizes the direct charges in line 21 and lists the indirect charges requested; please show the rate used in line 22. Multi-year awards will have out year funds shown in Section E. Please note that completion of the SF-424A form as described above represents NOAA's preference and may not be consistent with the instructions that accompany the SF-424A form. All budget figures should match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives. Each proposed sub-award of \$25,000 or more should be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the proposed subaward budget.

c. Budget Information for Construction Programs: Form SF-424C

d. Assurances for Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424B

- e. Assurances for Construction Programs: Form SF-424D
- f. Certification Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511
- g. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable)

NEPA information, and the Appendices can be uploaded within the application package under “Other Narrative” or “Other Forms”.

There is a 100 megabyte file size limit on individual files. Applicants can upload multiple files to avoid exceeding the 100 megabyte file size limit.

### **Budget Narrative and Justification**

In order to allow reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of all costs, applications should include a detailed budget narrative and justification of costs. The budget narrative submitted with the final application should match the dollar amounts included on all required forms and clearly link to the project narrative. Please explain each calculation and provide a narrative justification to explain expenditures for each budget category. The budget narrative should describe, by category of expenditure, the total funding needed to accomplish the objectives described in the project narrative for the entire award period. Please explain how categorical costs are derived in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to determine if costs are 'allowable and reasonable' according to the cost principles referenced in 2 CFR 200, Subpart E. Budget narrative categories should correspond to the standard object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A. For additional details, please review the budget guidance provided at:

[https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/\\_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-for-NOAA-grants.pdf](https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-for-NOAA-grants.pdf).

Applicants should include costs in their proposal to cover expenses to track and measure outcomes, and key metrics of their program.

Applicants should include detailed budget information regarding all known contracts and subawards, and indicate the basis for the cost and price estimates in the narrative.

Applicants should describe activities to occur or products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Each subaward should include form SF-424A. Detailed budget information includes:

- a. Name of identified qualified sub recipient or contractor, affiliation, contact information, and method of selection. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection. Information must include the name and location (city, state, and Congressional district) of the entity receiving the funds and the location of the primary place of performance under the contract or subaward.).
- b. Period of Performance. Include the dates for the performance period. If it involves a number of tasks, include the performance period for each task.
- c. Scope of Work. List and describe the specific activities or tasks to be performed.
- d. Criteria for Measuring Accountability: Include an itemized line item breakdown as well as total contract/award amount. If applicable, include any indirect costs paid under the contract/award and the indirect cost rate used.
- e. Itemized Budget. Include categories used in the program budget for subrecipients or cost-based contractors. If applicable, include any direct cost paid under the subaward or contract and the indirect cost rate used.

All subawards and contracts must be made consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 200.331-200.333 for subawards, and 200.317-200.327 for procurements.

For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs or price is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project. Note that equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$10,000. See 2 CFR 200.1 Equipment and 2 CFR 200.313.

Non-federal applicants should identify, if this information is known when submitting the grant application, who they plan to request that NOAA transfer equipment or property ownership titles to after the project ends. The decision on grant ownership requests will be made by the Grants Officer during the grant closeout process.

The cost or price, purpose, and method of selection for identified and planned acquisition contracts should be thoroughly justified in the Budget Narrative. Describe products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Procurements are subject to policies described in 2 CFR 200.317 - .327. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection.

The budget narrative should also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants should state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. If a foreign air carrier is anticipated to be used for any portion of travel, prior approval is required under the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section G.05.d.,

[https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF\\_0.pdf](https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf), and therefore, such travel should be included

in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. Applicants may factor in travel costs for participation in a bi-annual NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) workshop for recipients.

See below regarding treatment of Indirect Costs in the Budget Narrative.

## Appendices

Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g. resumes, references, lists of relevant work products or reports, detailed methodologies, data sources, detailed budget narrative, letters of collaboration, letters of support, lists of data sources, and maps). Applicants should number the pages in their proposal and any appendices.

As a standard practice, NOAA requires that resumes for Principal Investigators (PIs) of competitive awards be on file and maintained in the grants processing system used by the DOC, eRA Commons. Recipients of any award (competitive or non-competitive) are required to designate PIs in eRA Commons within 30 days of receiving award offers.

The following appendix documents should be included in the application package:

**a. Letters of Collaboration.** All supporting letters from partner organizations that are instrumental to the project should be included in the application package. Letters must clearly indicate the level of commitment and/or collaboration. Letters of collaboration do not need original signatures.

For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees may provide a limited statement verifying the nature and extent of the collaboration and confirming prior coordination activities. Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowable and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers.

**b. Resumes.** Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator(s) associated with each project and other key personnel critical to the success of the proposal. Please limit resumes to a maximum of two pages for each key investigator. Publication lists should be limited to all publications in the last 3 years with up to five other relevant papers.

**c. Data Management Plan.** The Data Management Plan should address the requirements in this section of the Announcement.

- 1) Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely used or open-standard format, and should be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.
- 2) Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. There is an optional fillable form for data management and sharing plans at this link: [https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/\\_pdf/forms/data-mgmt-sharing-plan-review-form.pdf](https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/data-mgmt-sharing-plan-review-form.pdf). Otherwise, a typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. The NOAA Program is not offering specific data management technical guidance. Proposals are to describe their proposed approach. Use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged. For more information about data sharing in this program, contact the agency official listed in Section VII. of this funding announcement.
- 3) NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.
- 4) Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.
- 5) NOAA's Administrative Order on the Management of Environmental Data Management and Information is available under: [http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative\\_orders/chapter\\_212/212-15.html](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.html)
- 6) Principal Investigators should indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.
- 7) More information about the NOAA Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Committee website at: <https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.all.php>
- 8) Responsible NOAA Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients:

Randy Warren  
*Data Manager*  
NOAA's Office for Coastal Management  
Randy.Warren@noaa.gov

**Additional Data Management Guidance to Proposal Writers:**

Data Accessibility: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program requires that public access to grant/contract-produced data be enabled. Funding recipients are expected to submit data to NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), which will provide public access and permanent archiving. The NOAA Program has held preliminary consultation with NCEI regarding these pending data.

Technical Recommendations: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program is not offering specific technical guidance. Proposals are to describe their proposed approach. Use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged.

Resources: NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program resources for data sharing or archiving have already been identified; proposals should not include such costs (unless data volume is expected to exceed 20GB).

NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

**Permits and Approvals**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. Applicants must provide a list of all known permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending, permit granted, etc.) or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary. Applicants should include this required element even if permits are not required. Failure to apply for and/or obtain federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide information to support required environmental analyses (i.e., NEPA and environmental consultations) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding. For work proposed within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other federally designated managed areas, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to commencement of an award.

The CRCP has a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS; <https://coralreef.noaa.gov/about/enviro-compliance.html>) and a joint Programmatic Biological and Conference Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation on the National Coral Reef Conservation Program and Mission: Iconic Reefs (BiCoP; [https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/44324/noaa\\_44324\\_DS1.pdf](https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/44324/noaa_44324_DS1.pdf)) that streamlines the environmental evaluation and compliance process. NOAA will need to ensure the proposed work aligns with actions and level of impacts described in these documents and applicants must implement relevant 1) required best management practices (Appendix A of PEIS), 2) reasonable and prudent measures and conservation recommendations from the BiCoP, and/or 3) any other required actions from other environmental consultations (e.g., National Historic Preservation Act). If a successful applicant chooses not to implement requirements in the CRCP programmatic documents, NOAA will need to complete independent environmental compliance actions, which may delay the funding or starting of the work.

**Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)**



The proposed budget may include an amount for indirect or “Facilities and Administrative” costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. See 2 CFR 200.1 and 200.412-415.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal Government should be included with the application package. If an award recipient does not have an established indirect cost rate with any federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimis rate (15% of modified total direct costs) described at 2 CFR 200.414. Alternatively, the negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that recipients within 90 days of the award start date, submit to the address listed below documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review.

*Jennifer Jackson, Grants Officer*  
*NOAA Grants Management Division*  
*1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor*  
*Silver Spring, Maryland 20910*  
[Jennifer.Jackson@noaa.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Jackson@noaa.gov)

Applicants are permitted to request indirect costs if their organization has an established Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a federal agency that covers the period of the award. Applicants requesting indirect costs should submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with their application package.

Indirect-cost-rate-agreement documentation is not required for subawardees; however, indirect cost rates at the negotiated levels should be paid by the primary awardee. Under 2 CFR 200.414 “Indirect (F&A) Costs,” any applicant that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 CFR 200.403 “Factors affecting allowability of costs.” If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a cooperator chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-federal entity may apply to do at any time. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. An approved rate may be further negotiated prior to the start of the award, and before subsequent budget periods, in cases where NOAA or other federal partners provided significant resources to the recipient. In addition to the standard elements described above, applicants may upload additional supporting documentation by using the 'Optional Form' box under 'Other Attachments' in Grants.gov during the application submission process.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional NEPA information.

### **C. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in its application; and (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once but must be periodically renewed. On April 4, 2022, the federal government began using a new Unique Entity Identifier number provided by SAM. Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed to receive a UEI, which is provided by SAM. If your entity is already registered in SAM.gov, your new UEI has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov. This includes inactive registrations. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

#### **D. Submission Dates and Times**

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by and validated by Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern time on January 31, 2025.

Applicants should consider the possibility of winter storms and other unforeseen impacts from natural hazards that could affect their Internet access and use of Grants.gov on or before application due dates. Applicants should be aware that localized hazardous weather or other situations beyond their control affecting their ability to submit packages before deadlines may not result in changes to the application deadline.

#### **E. Intergovernmental Review**

Funding applications submitted under this competition are subject to Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SPOC-list-as-of-2023.pdf>>

#### **F. Funding Restrictions**

##### **1. Ineligible projects**

The following projects will not be eligible for funding: (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or federal law; (2) Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under federal or state law; and (3) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

NOAA will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective start date and end date of the award, and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award. Such expenditures may not be considered as part of the applicant's cost share or matching contribution.

##### **2. Cost Principles**

Recipients are subject to the 2 CFR 200, Subpart E “Cost Principles,” as well as any DOC regulations that may be in effect at the time of award. Generally, allowable costs include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as the costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

## **G. Other Submission Requirements**

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organizations must first obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov, if needed (refer to Section IV. Applications and Submission Information, Section C). Organizations can register with eRA Commons in tandem with completing their full SAM and Grants.gov registrations; however, all registrations must be in place by time of application submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.

The first listed PD/PI listed on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g. agency login" field of the Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile Form. Failure to register in the Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in that field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

The standard NOAA funding application package is available at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) (Grants.gov) by searching the Funding Opportunity Number or the Federal Assistance Listings number (11.482). Application packages, including all letters of collaboration, shall be submitted through the “Apply” function on Grants.gov. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application. Applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Unique Identity Identifier and be registered in the SAM.gov, which requires periodic renewals. Refer to Section IV.C. for details on receiving a unique identity identifier number and registering with SAM.gov.

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive two email messages from Grants.gov within the next 24 to 48 hours updating them on the progress of their application. The first email provides a tracking number and confirms receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system. The second email indicates that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive a third email when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

If an applicant submits multiple electronic versions of the proposal, the applicant should advise the federal agency of the tracking number that should be withdrawn. Applicants shall not electronically submit packages with files embedded within files as any such files may not be reviewed or factored into the merit review process.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt by Grants.gov, not NOAA; the second confirms that the submission is acceptable and timely; and the third validates that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing).

The federal program office has a process to review for completeness. Administrative reviews generally take place after deadlines because the majority of applicants apply just before deadlines. If there are no time constraints and available resources, the federal agency may reach back to applicants who have submitted incomplete packages.

## H. Address for Submitting Proposals

For administrative or technical questions regarding this announcement, contact the competition manager: Craig Reid, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Grant Coordinator, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, phone 202-240-7382, or email <Craig.A.Reid@noaa.gov>.

## V. Application Review Information

<b>1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 30</b>
<p>This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the proposal address critical issues/needs described in the Priority Activities (see Section I.B.)?</li> <li>2. Are projects distributed geographically throughout the relevant basin?</li> <li>3. Does the applicant demonstrate the ability and commitment to partner with, and conduct projects through qualified States, Native entities, covered coral reef managers, nonprofit organizations, and other coral reef research centers to the benefit of NOAA and the states and territories?</li> </ol> <p>For this section, reviewers should consider how well the application addresses the questions above and score using this scale: Poor - 0-5, Fair = 6-11, Good = 12-18 Commendable = 19-24, and Excellent = 25-30.</p>	
<b>2. Technical/scientific merit</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 30</b>
<p>This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the proposal include a summary of clearly stated, achievable goals and objectives that address the Priority Activities (see Section I.B.)?</li> <li>2. Do the proposed projects have realistic implementation plans (i.e. timelines and milestones) and is there an effective mechanism to evaluate the progress of projects during the five-year period?</li> <li>3. Do the proposed projects integrate and/or build upon existing national or regional resources, networks, plans, or frameworks in order to achieve the proposed objectives?</li> <li>4. Do the proposed projects incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work?</li> </ol> <p>For this section, reviewers should consider how well the application addresses the questions above and score using this scale: Poor = 0-5, Fair = 6-11, Good = 12-18, Commendable = 19-24, and Excellent = 25-30.</p>	
<b>3. Overall qualifications of applicants</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 20</b>
<p>This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the applicant possess the specialized administrative and research capabilities and capacities described in the Capabilities and Capacities section (see Section I.B.)?</li> <li>2. Does the proposal demonstrate that the institution(s) and/or Principal Investigators have the qualifications to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by descriptions of past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing similar types of projects?</li> </ol>	

<p>3. Is there nationally and/or internationally recognized expertise within the appropriate disciplines needed to conduct the collaborative/interdisciplinary research described in the proposal?</p> <p>For this section, reviewers should consider how well the application addresses the questions above and score using this scale: Poor = 0-3, Fair = 4-7, Good = 8-11, Commendable = 12-15, and Excellent = 16-20.</p>	
<b>4. Project costs</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
<p>This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.</p> <p>For this section, reviewers should score using this scale: Poor = 0, Fair = 1-3, Good = 4-6, Commendable = 7-8, and Excellent = 9-10.</p>	
<b>5. Outreach and Education</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
<p>This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources.</p> <p>1. Does the proposal engage the public, local, and regional communities in the development, implementation, translation, and dissemination of culturally relevant public education and awareness programs on coral reefs and coral reef ecosystems including best practices for management and restoration, coral reefs' value, and threats to coral reef ecosystems?</p> <p>For this section, reviewers should consider how well the application addresses the question above and score using this scale: Poor = 0, Fair = 1-3, Good = 4-6, Commendable = 7-8, and Excellent = 9-10.</p>	

## Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the standard NOAA evaluation criteria. Various questions under each criterion are provided to ensure that the applicant includes information that NOAA will consider important during the evaluation, in addition to any other information provided by the applicant. The information will be considered holistically, that is, the questions are not weighted subcriteria.

## Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to assure that it is timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications that meet the minimum requirements will be reviewed by at least three independent peer reviewers with coral reef ecosystem experience during a merit-based review and ranking process. Appropriate mechanisms will be implemented to avoid potential conflicts of interest during the proposal review process. Each reviewer will be asked to individually evaluate and rank proposals using the weighted evaluation criteria above. Proposal evaluations will be based exclusively on information included in the application. Merit reviewer ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

After the independent peer review, up to two panels may convene to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official regarding which proposals best meet the program objectives and priorities. The panel(s) may include federal and/or non-federal subject matter experts who were not part of the independent peer review and do not have a conflict of interest. The panel(s) may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means to discuss applications. If convened, the panel(s) will be presented with the top-ranked applications per basin, per the results of the technical review. Panelists will also receive the independent peer review scores and comments for each application. The panel(s) will rate all top-ranked proposals on the following scale:

- 1- Fair: application marginally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A and I.B and was moderately responsive to the Evaluation Criteria.

2 - Good: application adequately addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A and I.B and was strongly responsive to the Evaluation Criteria.

3 - Excellent: application exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was highly responsive to the Evaluation Criteria.

If panel(s) are held, the panels' ranked list will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding. If panel(s) are not held, the independent peer review ranking will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding.

The Selecting Official, or their designee, may negotiate the funding level or other major aspects of the proposal, and the Selecting Official will make the final recommendation for award to the Grants Officer based on the rank order and selection factors in Section V.C. to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate Federal funding and execute the award.

NOAA may select up to two (2) applications to be designated a RRCI. NOAA may elect to fund each RRCI application in full or in part, may ask applicants to work together or combine projects, may defer applications to the future, or may reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. If no proposal is funded in the current fiscal period, a proposal may be considered for funding in another fiscal period (e.g. FY 2026) without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

Please note that not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official may recommend alternate activities as appropriate or only partial funding based on the selection factors and the merit and/or panel review written evaluations. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives and activities, work plans, and budgets, and to provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. This may result in submission of a revised application before final funding decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, specific NOAA cooperative involvement with activities of each project, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA GMD, and Office for Coastal Management officials. Applicants should also note that modifications to projects may be necessary as a result of NOAA's efforts to comply with NEPA and other legislation. Selected applicants may be asked to address questions on NOAA's NEPA questionnaire, found at <https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf>.

## **Selection Factors**

The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
  - a. geographically
  - b. by type of institution
  - c. by type of partners
  - d. by research priority
  - e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those recommended for funding.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

**PRE-AWARD COSTS.** Per 2 CFR 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk without approval from NOAA and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award. This does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 CFR 200.460). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for direct proposal preparation costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. Pre-award costs expended more than 90 days prior to the period of performance start date require approval from the Grants Officer. This does not change the period of performance start date.

**GRANTS OFFICER SIGNATURE.** Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the Grants Officer has signed the grant agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

**LIMITATION OF LIABILITY.** Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Applications recommended for funding by the Selecting Official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office by email that their application was recommended for funding and remains under consideration. The applicant should be aware that the notification by the program office is not the official award notice and funding is not assured. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, eRA.

**Risk Review:** After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administration reviews. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) (formerly the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIS)) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be made by the NOAA Grants Officer.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain specific award conditions as necessary, such as a limitation on the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements which may lead to modification of the project's scope of work. These specific award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

**UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS.**

Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

**RESEARCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Commerce Terms, and the Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions (Research Terms) as implemented by the Department of Commerce, currently, at

<https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp>, both apply to the award. The Commerce Terms and the Research Terms are generally intended to harmonize with each other; however, where the Commerce Terms and the Research Terms differ in a Research award, the Research Terms prevail, unless otherwise indicated in a specific award condition.

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.**

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in eRA at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

**BUREAU TERMS AND CONDITIONS.** Successful applicants who accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by bureau-specific standard terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. For NOAA awards only, the Administrative Standard Award Conditions for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Financial Assistance Awards U.S. Department of Commerce are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at

<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance>

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA).** NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website:

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, [http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500\\_1508.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf).

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.



**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.** Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

**MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS.** The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

**NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY.**

NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award.

NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial>.

**SCIENCE INTEGRITY.** 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

**REVIEW OF RISK.** After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

**REVIEWS AND EVALUATION.** The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with §200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

**REQUIRED USE OF AMERICAN IRON, STEEL, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AND**

**CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS.** If applicable, and pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”), Pub.L. No. 117-58, which includes the Build American, Buy American (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52 and OMB M-22-11, recipients of an award of Federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (DOC) are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project for infrastructure unless: 1) all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States—this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States; 2) all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and 3) all construction materials<sup>1</sup> are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

WAIVERS. When necessary, recipients may apply for, and DOC may grant, a waiver from these requirements. DOC will notify the recipient for information on the process for requesting a waiver from these requirements. 1) When DOC has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference in any case in which DOC determines that: a. applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public interest; b. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or c. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent. A request to waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference must be in writing. DOC will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required for any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15 days and must be reviewed by the Made in America Office. There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described at [whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america](https://whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america).

DEFINITIONS. “Construction materials” includes an article, material, or supply—other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives<sup>2</sup> —that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall. “Domestic content procurement preference” means all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States. “Infrastructure” includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy. “Project” means the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States. -- 1 Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives. 2 IIJA, § 70917(c)(1).

### **Data Sharing Requirements**

~~Refer to Section IV.B.5.4 of this announcement for details on data sharing requirements.~~

### **C. Reporting**

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Reports are submitted electronically through eRA.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the FFATA Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.fsr.gov/> on all subawards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports consistent with 2 CFR 200.328 - .330 and DOC Standard Terms and Conditions electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, eRA. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6- month period from the start date of the award. Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. NOAA will provide instructions for submitting financial and progress reports upon request.

A comprehensive final report is due 120 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (including but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, public service announcements, workshop proceedings, etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 120 days of the end of the award. Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited." If the applicant has requested publication costs, resulting journal publications must be made available to the public free of charge.

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's GMD and are up-to-date. In their final progress report, applicants will be asked to (a) clearly state the resulting overall impact of their project with respect to coral reef conservation or within the coastal management community; and (b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's GMD and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)."

If equipment or tangible personal property is purchased with grant funds, applicants shall submit an inventory to the extent required by the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance set out at 2 C.F.R. Part 200.313. As necessary, SF-428 forms may be attached as an appendix to the final progress report or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

Recipients must inventory tangible property at least once every two years and at award closeout. As necessary, SF-428 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

Recipients must submit reports at least annually and at award closeout on the status of real property in which the federal government retains an interest, unless the federal interest in the real property extends 15 years or more. As necessary, SF-429 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

The program office recommends that if the equipment is no longer needed, recipients are encouraged to request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients "Submit Additional Closeout Documents" as an award action request in eRA. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with OMB requirements.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over \$25,000. See 2 CFR 170 at [http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl).

## VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative or technical questions regarding this announcement, contact the competition manager: Craig Reid, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Grant Coordinator, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, phone 202-240-7382, or email <Craig.A.Reid@noaa.gov>.

Applicants with questions about the All Islands Committee Executive Director position may contact Craig Reid, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Grant Coordinator <Craig.A.Reid@noaa.gov>.

Applicants with questions about the Susan L. Williams Coral Reef Management Fellowship program may contact the NOAA National Coral Reef Fellowship Coordinator, John Tomczuk <[John.Tomczuk@noaa.gov](mailto:John.Tomczuk@noaa.gov)>.

## VIII. Other Information

Information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflicts of interest and nondisclosure agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.